1 - Belmont
1 - Sullivan
1 - W. L. Smith
1 - Branigan
1 - Lenihan
1 - Lee

February 7, 1964

ROBERT EDWARD WEBSTER

Robert Webster lived in Russia from August, 1959, until May, 1962, when he returned to the United States. He has been interviewed by this Bureau and the following is a summary of the information he furnished.

Webster was born October 23, 1928, at Tiffin, Ohio. He served in the United States Navy from August, 1947, until May, 1950. In November, 1957, he began employment with the Rand Development Company, Cleveland, Ohio.

In 1959 Webster made three trips to Russia to represent his employer at the American National Exhibition in Moscow. In March, 1959, he was in Moscow for one week, in May, 1959, and June, 1959, he was there for seven weeks and his third visit began in July, 1959. At this time he was married and the father of two children. During his third trip to Russia, he requested permission to remain there.

The thought of remaining in Russia came to Webster during his second trip in 1959; however, at that time he made no effort to remain there. Shortly after his arrival in Moscow in July, 1959, he discussed this with Alexander Shiskin, an English-speaking Russian official at the exhibition, and Shiskin arranged for an interview with one Popof. At this meeting Webster filled out a questionnaire furnishing his background and expressing his wish to remain in Russia to better himself in the plastics industry. Popof did not accept this reason and Webster then changed it to state that he wanted to stay in Russia since all business in the United States was controlled by the Government.

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Webster was interviewed on four occasions by Popof and other persons. The interviews were aimed at determining if Webster was certain that he wanted to stay in Russia and to determine his technical qualifications and experience. Three days before he was scheduled to leave Russia, he received permission to remain there. In company with a male Intourist guide, he traveled to Leningrad, Russia.

Tolson
Belmont
Mohr
Casper
Callahan
Conrad
DeLoach
Evans
Gale
Rosen
Sullivan
Tavel
Trotter
Tele. Room
Holmes
Gandy

105-81285
ORIG AND ONE FURNISHED COMMISSION
JPL:pa (11)
1 - 105-72888 (Ricciardelli)
1 - 105-81285 (Webster)

62-109090-1 FM

ENCLOSURE

Robert Edward Webster

Webster has stated that his decision to remain in Russia was based on several things. First, he desired to escape his family responsibilities in the United States. Secondly, his wife had objected to the travel necessitated by his job and, finally, he was seriously in debt.

In addition to the above reasons, when Webster was in Moscow on his second trip, he had met one Vera Platonova, who was separated from her husband. Their friendship was surreptitious, as Soviet nationals were not supposed to mingle with foreigners. After Webster had received permission to remain in Russia and had been in Leningrad for two weeks, he was permitted to telephone Platonova and she was permitted to visit him in Leningrad. Webster then traveled to Moscow where he officially renounced his American citizenship to American officials and then went on a one-month vacation with Platonova.

After this vacation Webster and Platonova returned to Leningrad and he became employed at the Plastics Institute, with Platonova as his interpreter. His job was to establish a Fiberglas Department since there was none in the institute. During this time he and Platonova resided in a common-law relationship which resulted in a daughter being born on August 18, 1960. He also attempted to design a Fiberglas resin depositor, but due to the lack of parts and equipment, the machine did not work.

About December of 1959 Webster received a letter from his father informing him that his mother had suffered a mental breakdown and that he was needed at home. This letter disturbed Webster and in May, 1960, he traveled to Moscow accompanied by Platonova on official business. While in Moscow he contacted the American Embassy to determine the necessary procedure to return to the United States. When he returned to Leningrad, he began steps to obtain the required Soviet documents and in August, 1960, made his first application for a Soviet exit visa. About two months later he was told the request had been denied and that he would have to wait one year before reapplying. One year later he again made an application and the exit visa was granted in February, 1962. On March 12, 1962, the American Embassy advised him that his Soviet exit visa was approved and he was given instructions regarding the obtaining of an American visa.

Robert Edward Webster

Regarding his efforts to leave Russia, Webster stated that Vera Platonova made no effort to persuade him to remain in the Soviet Union, but she assisted him in preparing forms and obtaining various documents which he needed. When it became known that Webster wanted to leave Russia, two men from Moscow interviewed him for about fifteen minutes and asked him to reconsider his decision. He told these men he wanted to return to his wife and children and to see his sick mother. No pressure was exerted on him and no political matters were discussed.

Webster has stated that he was not aware of any participation of Soviet intelligence personnel in his interviews or otherwise either before or after his defection. He was not aware if Vera Platonova was ever contacted by Soviet intelligence. Further, to the best of his knowledge Soviet intelligence exhibited no interest in him before his departure to the United States. No requests were made of him and no agreements were made in return for his exit visa. The only question concerning American defense matters occurred when some engineers from Moscow asked him what Government work was handled in the Rand Company and Webster denied any knowledge of this, which he said was true.

Webster arrived back in the United States on May 20, 1962, as an alien admitted under the Russian quota.